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The following Sermon was prepared several years ago, by a distinguished Clergyman of Maryland. In its commendation, nothing more will be said than that it had the entire approbation of that excellent judge of sound divinity, our late much revered Bishop Claggett.

H. L. DAVIS, JR.  
A SERMON ON ST. JOHN III. 5.

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

It would be impossible to recount the many sermons, essays, comments and observations, which have been made upon the historical incident of the Holy Gospel contained in our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus. This circumstance tends to prove sufficiently the vast importance and peculiar interest conceived in this particular passage; and may bespeak our concern, as it has that of those who have gone before us.

There is but one remark which I feel disposed to make, respecting much, if not most, of what I have heard or read on this subject. That the incident is commonly considered in a light different from that in which our Lord himself does immediately present it. It is, I think, sufficiently obvious to an unbiassed mind, that our Divine Master does here intimate something more to Nicodemus, than

the necessity of conversion alone. The very language he employs may convince us, that He had more than this in contemplation. Had He spoken of conversion, we cannot easily conceive why He did not inculcate the necessity of repentance also. "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name," was the declared object of His mission. This he preached Himself. The twelve, by his orders, went out and preached that men should repent: and when the Apostles after His Ascension, pursued and acted upon the pattern and the directions which He had given them, they preached that men should "repent of their wickedness;" That "all men every where should repent;" "That they should repent and be converted"—or that they should "repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." This was the phraseology, the mode of expression, employed on all occasions in their public addresses. And why then, do we conceive, did our blessed Lord depart from it, if He intended only to inculcate on Nicodemus the doctrine of repentance and conversion? Why did He propound matters of such known simplicity, in a style which perplexed and confounded this prime teacher in Israel? It is impossible, I apprehend, to say. The passage will remain, in this view of it, a mystery to us greater, if possible, than

it appeared to Nicodemus himself.

We might plead some better warrant for this construction, had our Lord confined himself to his first general observation:—That a man “must be born again,” in order to his entering the kingdom of God, v. 3. But when he comes, as in our text, to enlarge and explain, by saying, that in order to this end, a man must be “born of water and of the Spirit,” his words become altogether inexplicable—upon such narrow, such forced construction. They appeared so to this accomplished professor of the Jewish school; though we may admit that he was as competent to an accurate sense of the rules of language, as he was to understand the tenets of his religion, and the usages of his own people. It was, to correct all misapprehension, to remove every inadequate conception from the mind of Nicodemus, and to rectify his views throughout, as a theologian of the Ancient School, that our Lord unfolded to him the full import of an authorised admission into the Christian Church, or “the Kingdom of God.” Having reference, we may conceive, to the period near at hand, when such admission would be more general, and Christian Baptism universal.

1. He referred, first of all, to the known rite and practice, of Baptismal regeneration, in the then common and undisputed acceptation of the term. It was a customary form of speech with the Jews to say, when a heathen convert had by Baptism been admitted into their church, that such a one was “born again.” There was such a change in his condition and standing, as well as in the views and disposition of his mind, that they could express it by no apter similitude, than that of a new birth. He was evidently

adopted into a new family and made at least a nominal member of the household, and an heir of the promises of God. When therefore our blessed Lord rejoined to Nicodemus by the pointed interrogation, “Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?” He manifestly alluded to some received adage, some customary mode of conception, which was well known to him. He said in effect, Art thou, a man so versed in all the customs and ordinances of Israel, at a loss here, in a case so exactly parallel? Knowest thou not, that Baptism has long been considered and represented as a kind of new birth and initiation into the Jewish Church. Why then should it be less significant with respect to the Christian? Be assured, that if in the one case, the strong image of a new generation and birth would apply, it will be no less applicable in the other. Yea, it will be more forcible, it will imply much more; it will imply not merely an outward change—a change in the letter, but in the spirit also. The Jewish worshipper had degenerated exceedingly, (as, alas! may the Christian worshipper also) and a mere formality had been substituted in the place of that devotion which is in spirit and in truth. This however we may reserve as a subsequent article of discourse, and in the mean time let us observe, how the several parts of the chapter before us correspond with this mode of interpretation, and are seemingly unintelligible upon any other.

This interview between our Blessed Lord and the Jewish Rabbi, was solicited by the latter; but in a manner which necessarily called for animadversion. His style was respectful, and his address even courteous; but his advances, we must remem-



ber, were made in the night—he came not in open day, for fear of censure and his own personal consequence and standing in the Sanhedrim. Like the young nobleman recorded by the Evangelist, as having made his advances to our Lord, and in a style no less reverential, there was yet something deficient, some capital defect, without which being supplied, there could be no meetness for the kingdom of Heaven. With respect to Nicodemus, it was requisite, that he should forego, what he appeared yet to value inordinately, his station in the synagogue, and be willing to brave the consequences of a public and avowed confession of, and adherence to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, with whom he had then the singular honour to confer.

It was the method of our Lord, above all other teachers, to address himself to the character and situation of his hearers. When he told the young man we have just mentioned, that if he really desired to be perfect, he must “go, sell all that he had, and come and follow him.” He well knew the ascendancy which wealth had over the mind of this otherwise amiable youth. So, here, speaking with Nicodemus, he knew and warned him of the necessity there was in his case of a thorough and radical, an outward and inward change, to accomplish the end for which he professed to be solicitous. His language was indeed less direct and absolute; but sufficiently plain and particular, to be at last well understood by this learned Rabbi. His whole reply is what we call *argumentum ad hominem*, an argument to the man:—to the distinction and intelligence, the wishes and professions, and yet the secret and irresolute application of the character

before him. That he had come in the night, was made the occasion for introducing the appropriate figure of light, in contrast with darkness, in the subsequent course of this conversation—And the whole tenor of the conversation was calculated to assure him, that nothing less would answer his case, if he had any views to discipleship with Christ, or a place in the Messiah’s kingdom, than a public and thorough, an unequivocal and cordial adoption of the Christian faith, and a self-denial equal to all contingencies in his own particular case likely to result therefrom—in short, that “unless he became one of Christ’s disciples by a Baptismal regeneration, and was purified in his heart from all worldly and carnal appetites, so as to live a new and spiritual life, according to the principles of his doctrine, he could not be a partaker of the benefits of his heavenly kingdom:”—nor we may add of course, be considered as a member of his Church and Kingdom upon earth. The above remark is from a paraphrase which has been some time before the public in the history of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by \*two eminent writers. It states beforehand what was proposed as a second article of discourse; besides corroborating what has been considered just, and I hope satisfactorily, though briefly, as belonging to our subject. It is evident, that conversion, or a mere inward change, could not alone be implied in the words of our text; for to this Nicodemus could have conformed consistently with his correct proceeding in regard to our Saviour as the Messiah, and could have needed none of the admonitions which were obviously, though indirectly and

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\*Thompson and Price.

delicately levelled at his case:—he needed not to have been reminded of our Lord, that “light was come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil;”—nor to have been apprised of the inadequacy, the indistinctness and insufficiency of his faith, as well as practice, by the question. “If I have told you of earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things? No; an inward and private change was part, but only part, of what was required. An outward and public acknowledgment, an unreserved and undissembled declaration for the Messiah, and adoption into his kingdom—uninviting as his then circumstances were (to the eye of sense) as a Prince and Saviour; adoption, I say into his Church and Kingdom by the long known Rite of Confirmation was, or soon would be indispensable.

[To be continued.]

From the Christian Observer.

### *Advantages of Early Piety.*

WE, none of us, know how to value as we ought the advantages of having religious parents; and how to form a due estimate of the sin, and consequent misery, of not improving that blessing.

I have been led to reflect on these subjects, by the case of a young man just called into the presence of his God, who was sent by his friends into my neighbourhood for his health, and recommended to my notice.

When I first saw him, he was evidently very ill; and I was glad, that by mentioning religion as soon as we met, he afforded me an opportunity of making some inquiries, and some observations, which the occasion suggested. He ingenu-

ously owned, that he had turned a deaf ear to the pious suggestions and advice of his good mother, until the fear of death, about three months before had appalled him, and made him fly for refuge to religion. Previously to this event, tho’ he had defended Christian truths in opposition to Sceptics, and for some time complied with the solemn request of his father, that he would attend a particular place of worship, his heart seems to have been entirely unaffected. I found that he had for a month or two been in the habit of reading Scripture; and particularly the book of Psalms, which he relished as always affording him matter suited to his case in his different frames of mind. He spoke with much approbation of a book, which a relation had, without his knowledge, put into his travelling trunk. I was pleased to find that this was an excellent and practical treatise on the nature and effects of vital religion. In addition to these very favourable circumstances, I thought I saw in him a frank and teachable spirit, and a disposition to prayer. After making such remarks as I thought might be of use to him, pointing out some parts of Scripture to his attention, and lending him a religious book, I took my leave; entertaining very strong hopes, that extremely scanty as his religious knowledge evidently was, he was under the divine teaching, and in the way of salvation.

My distance from him, and particular circumstances, prevented my renewing my visit until about a week had elapsed. On entering his chamber, I thought that his illness had evidently increased. This circumstance induced me to recur very speedily to a religious subject. However, I was much less pleased with his conversation than I had been



before. He spoke with reserve, and seemed rather to wish to converse on other topics, and uttered a sentiment apparently inconsistent with something which he had said, when I had been last with him. After speaking to him, as plainly as I could without giving offence, on two or three points of prime importance, I left him, hoping that some circumstance of a temporary nature had unhinged his mind, and indisposed him at that time for religious conversation. Being informed however by one of the family with whom he resided, that his physician thought him in a state of great danger, and that he had used profane language in his intercourse with the servants, I determined to return to him, especially as the members of the family, and his physician, shrunk from the task of imparting to him the awful information, that he was probably on the very brink of eternity: information, which, doubtful as the state of his soul appeared to be, it was peculiarly important that he should receive. Though I executed the task I had undertaken with as much tenderness and delicacy as I could, he was greatly shocked. I sat some time with him, and endeavoured to lead his mind from temporal to eternal things, mixing the bright hopes, which Christianity holds out to the true followers of the Saviour, with those energetic and solemn calls to genuine repentance and absolute faithfulness, which what had been said to me respecting his profane language could not but suggest. Poor man! he struggled hard to persuade himself and me, that he could not be in danger, and clung to this world, with an anxiety which confined our conversation, in a far greater degree than I wished, to a discussion respecting his state of health. As I felt myself bound

to express my dissent from his opinions, this line of conversation was, on my account, as well as his, extremely irksome to me. I took leave of him with cordial good wishes, accompanied with a strong exhortation not to labour "for the meat which perisheth," and to profit by the warning, which the providence of God had given him through me.

In a few days I renewed my visit, and found him still, poor young man! struggling for a prolongation of life: a struggle in which all he could do must be utterly unavailing; and grievously impeded thereby in his spiritual course. He caught at straws and though evidently on his death-bed, succeeded in some measure in persuading himself, that the very circumstances which proved the aggravation of his disease were favourable symptoms. His mind however was calm; and though his state of health appeared to be the subject on which it was most employed, yet he listened to religious conversation much more readily than before, and from the part he took in it, I hoped that he had been no stranger to prayer and spiritual meditation since I had last seen him. But still all that was pleasing and promising on these and other religious points, fell much below what I wished to have found in him. I again spoke to him very earnestly, though with tenderness and affection, of the things which belonged to his peace, and endeavoured to shew him the great futility of speculations about the state of his health.

Very bad weather, and domestic circumstances, kept me from him for nearly a week. At last, when I was on the point of setting out to see him, I heard that he had expired the preceding evening. On making inquiries respecting his state of

mind before his death, I had the satisfaction of finding, that he had met death with composure and fortitude, and with a prayer-book in his hand. A lady of the family thought him a true penitent.

Earnestly do I hope, that this lady's opinion may have been well founded. But is it possible to witness a case like that of this young gentleman, without the deepest regret, that the calls of the Lord of the vineyard were so long heard in vain; and, if obeyed at all, were not obeyed until the eleventh hour, when the bewildered labourer has often scarcely time to seize his tools, and begin to use them, before his day is gone? What must be the effect of his example among his fellows? What the feelings with which he must approach his Lord? He has spent many hours in the open dishonour, and only one in a very unskilful and indifferent, if not also a very dubious service, of the gracious master, whom he was always bound to love and obey.

But suppose him not *really* to have engaged as a labourer with his Lord; suppose him to have taken his tools in his hand indeed, but not to have determined in good earnest to use them; suppose him to have been still so far under the influence of the motives, which induced him to refuse to become his Lord's servant during so great a part of the day, as even at last rather to make some shew of working than to set to his spiritual work with full purpose of heart; what has he not lost by the egregious folly, and flagrant guilt of his procrastination? what must he not endure as his merited punishment? Let young people think of this, and beware of trifling with offers of mercy while in health and vigour.

But much as the kind of case, which I have been describing, leaves

surviving friends to regret and to apprehend; it also gives parents the greatest encouragement to labour with all diligence, in humble dependence on the divine blessing, to sow the good seed in the hearts of their offspring. No doubt the blessing which God promises to the descendants of them who love him for thousands of generations; is, in no small measure, conveyed by means of the instruction which he puts it into the hearts of parents to give their children; and the amount of the blessing will bear some, and perhaps a great proportion to the diligence and care with which the appointed means are used by parents. How different in all human probability would have been the end of this young man, had he been the son of irreligious or worldly parents! Instead of being pricked to the heart, and in a measure sensible where help was to be sought, when death seemed to threaten him, he would very likely have run the course of that multitude of thoughtless and wretched youths, who drop into untimely graves every year, and are either stupidly indifferent to their spiritual state, or if they seek any refuge from the wrath to come, fly to a refuge of lies. Having had an example of holiness before him in childhood and early youth, this young man was the better able to detect sin in himself, when his eyes were opened to see his danger. Christian truths were not new to him. Christian duties had been recommended to him, both by the precepts and the practice of his parents. He therefore had recourse to prayer, to meditation, to the most devotional parts of Scripture, and, I hope, in humble faith to the Saviour.

His state of mind at least did not exhibit that dismal and terrible blank, as to spiritual views and dis-



positions, which so frequently freezes and appals those, who are called to sick beds, and look out anxiously for better things; on the contrary, it afforded considerable grounds of hope respecting him. And if I, who was so newly introduced to his acquaintance, felt much comfort in this thought, what consolation must his pious parents receive from the account that will probably be given them of his death? Oh! let us attend to "the one thing needful," in our care of our children, with the earnestness and unremitting care which its transcendent importance demands. And though in this, as in every case, it is God alone who can give the increase; yet what ground have we to expect any increase, unless we make it our daily, and almost our hourly, business to till, and plant, and water, while our children continue near us; and do all, which circumstances will admit, in the same way, after they have left our sides.

### Hints on Public Worship.

[Concluded from page 206.]

ON Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, the *Litany* is appointed to be read instead of the prayers for the Clergy and for all conditions of men. A litany is a form of supplicatory prayer. "Supplications," says Hooker, "with solemnity, for the appeasing of God's wrath, were of the Greek church, termed *litanies*, and rogations, of the Latin." Daniel's litany is recorded, chap. ix. 4, &c. and the substance of a public litany, instituted and appointed by God himself, is to be found Joel ii. 17. At a very early period of the church it was the custom, as we learn from the fathers, for Christians "to meet very early in the morning, and to continue till three in the afternoon in prayer, fasting, hu-

miliation, and tears—for the defence of the church, and to obtain the mercy and favour of God." The litany of our church is a most affecting composition. It consists of invocation addressed to each person in the adorable Godhead; of deprecation of evil, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, endangering both our bodies and our souls; of supplication for ourselves in reference both to time and eternity. Throughout the Litany the congregation has a part to take by uniting their voices with that of their minister, imploring mercy and salvation. Let us ever remember that it is in the character of miserable sinners who stand in the most urgent need of mercy, that we approach the throne of grace. Let us bear in solemn remembrance that it is only the encouragement afforded by the mystery of our Redeemer's holy incarnation; by His holy nativity and circumcision by His baptism, fasting, and temptation; by His agony and bloody sweat; by His cross and passion; by His precious death and burial, by His glorious resurrection and ascension, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost, that we can indulge any hope, while we cry Good Lord deliver us, from the innumerable evils to which we are exposed, from God's wrath and from everlasting damnation.

Let us remember that our appeal is, throughout the litany, to Divine mercy, flowing through Jesus Christ our Lord—"They that know His name will put their trust in him."

The morning and evening services conclude with an ancient form called *The Prayer of St. Chrysostom*, and with the *Apostolic Blessing*. In the former we briefly sum up and renew all our former petitions, with an humble limitation as to what God may deem most expedient for us. But knowing that in two requests

we cannot have erred, we ask again for the knowledge of his truth in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting. By concluding with these requests we seem to acknowledge that, if we obtain these blessings, we need to be anxious for nothing more, but may safely leave all other matters without solicitude, to his wisdom who hath promised that all things shall "work together for good to them that love Him." Herein we obey our Lord's injunction, to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," assured that "all other things shall be added unto us." The concluding blessing, being the words of the Apostle, 2 Cor. xiii. 14, needs no recommendation. It is another acknowledgment of the ever blessed Trinity, and describes the grace and office of the several persons in the Godhead. It has always been used in the church: and when, of old, it was pronounced, the people bowed their heads and worshipped.

We are informed that the *Amen* of the primitive church was like a clap of thunder, so hearty was the concurrence thereby signified in the service which had been performed. May God hasten the return of those days, when large congregations with one heart and one voice glorified God! Amen.

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From the Christian Observer.

### *On the Duties of Elder Sisters.*

THERE is a class of females, whose power of benefitting their immediate connections, and ultimately society at large, is often second only to that of mothers themselves, but whose duties have not, perhaps, been sufficiently noticed in the exhortations which have issued from the press, or been inculcated in the pulpit—we

mean elder sisters—On these, in the event of the death of both or one of the parents, and even in a considerable measure, during their lifetime, must often devolve a large part of the task of forming the minds, and regulating the principles of the junior branches of the household. Their more immediate contact and intercourse with them, together with other circumstances, will often invest them with an influence, which though nominally far less than that of a mother, will not unfrequently be found practically equal, or even greater. The difference of age and pursuits, between the parent and child, is such, that they must necessarily live in a very different world; the child, therefore, though it may respect and obey the parental decision, and know it in theory to be the best that can possibly be given, finds perhaps no common ground between them, on which to argue the question, and would not therefore be displeased to discover how the same thing would be viewed, by those whose age and circumstances would tend to bring two parties somewhat nearer together: Again, a younger child is often more swayed in its real opinions, by the conduct and sentiments of one, who has gone over identically the same ground, than by the views of one who has been educated under different circumstances, who has not read the same books, or been influenced in childhood by the same associations, with the junior members of her own family. A parent often appears "a being of other days;" an elder sister is a friend of the same generation, who sometimes, in the estimation of the younger, makes up, by greater similarity of education and views, what may be wanting in maturity of thought, and authority of character.



From the Christian Observer.

*Of Holiness of Heart.*

I HAVE often mourned over the tendency of my own mind to rest in a state of imperfect attainment; to stop short of that holiness, which is at once the beauty, the dignity, and the felicity of the Christian character; to be satisfied with lamenting its absence, instead of straining every nerve in its pursuit; and of seeking in fervent and importunate prayer, that through the power of the Divine Spirit, and to the praise of the glory of his grace, I might make more progress in this heavenly wisdom, and press more forward to the prize of my high calling of God, in Christ Jesus. Now the remedy for this disease is not more knowledge, but more experimental living upon that already acquired. What I want is, that daily, hourly, constant, solemn impression of scriptural truth upon my heart, which our communion service so justly calls "feeding on Christ, in the heart by faith." But I have observed in myself, and in others too, a tendency to judge the character by other criterions; by increasing light and knowledge, rather than by the growth of those holy dispositions, and tempers, which are the effects of faith and the fruits of the Spirit; by outward zeal and useful exertions, rather than by the increasing conformity to the mind, which was in Christ Jesus; that humble self-denying, forbearing, meek, and watchful spirit of prayer, which so much becomes a helpless and unworthy creature, within the confines of an enemy's country, with a deceitful heart within, and in the constant presence of a holy God.

I have ever considered christianity as a glorious provision for the happiness of man; originating in unspeakable love, devised by uner-

ring wisdom, and executed by Almighty power; and this accords with the views of that holy man, who defined true religion as "happiness in God." In truth, our passage thro' this life, is a state of discipline, whereby our all wise Father is preparing us for perfect happiness in the progressive attainment of that holiness which constitutes the very atmosphere of Heaven. Heaven is the abode of perfect bliss; each heart is tuned in harmony by the love of the living God, which diffuses itself in mutual benevolence and peace; and all are perfectly happy, because all perfectly obey the Divine will, and perfectly fear and love the infinitely perfect and glorious God, the centre and the source of all excellence.

Now, if it be the christian's privilege, not only to have a heaven in reversion beyond the grave, but also to enjoy on earth the foretaste of the happiness of just men, made perfect; in proportion as he participates in their feelings and employments; if, though our only title to Heaven be the merits of Him who hath purchased eternal redemption for us, there must be a meetness wrought within our souls, for the company of those pure spirits, who "circle God's throne rejoicing;" if all this be so, shall we renounce the peace and joy which accompanies the fulfilment of this law of Heaven—the love of God, with all the heart and mind, and soul, and strength, and the love of our neighbour as our selves? What folly would it be to suffer any sophistry to beguile us of the great reward, which is inseparable from keeping its holy precepts. To rob us of that glorious liberty, wherewith Christ has made us free from the law of sin and death? Shall we not rather rouse every faculty to exertion, that each day may exhibit

our main conformity to this Divine law; that we may receive the great Redeemer, as our prophet and our King, as well as our High Priest; and join with the pious Monarch of Israel, "Do not I love thy commandments above gold, and precious stones? Therefore hold I fast all the commandments, and all false ways I utterly abhor."

To the Editor of the Christian Observer.

The following account was drawn up at my request by the eldest son of the gentleman to whom it relates, and as its tendency appeared to me important, I have presumed to request a place for it in your valuable miscellany. B.

My father in the education of his children manifested the same indifference to our eternal welfare, which is observable in the generality of worldly people; but it pleased God, notwithstanding this disadvantage, to convince several of us of the infinite importance of religion, and the necessity of making it our first concern. In proportion as this conviction increased, were we grieved to think that our parent should still remain heedless of the things belonging to his peace. His strong prejudices forbade all religious conversation. We therefore confined our endeavours chiefly to frequent and earnest prayer in his behalf. Occasionally, indeed, when absent from home, we wrote letters of faithful admonition, tempered by filial affection and reverence, in which we earnestly exhorted him to turn to God. He discovered, however, a manifest aversion to the subject, and in some instances, treated it with contempt, although there is little doubt that impressions favourable to religion were, by these means, produced in his mind.

He was at length afflicted by a disease which gradually impaired his health, and in the end occasioned his death. He now became thoughtful, sought retirement, read his Bible and was regular in his devotional exercises. Being alone with him about this time, he opened his mind freely to me concerning his declining health, and the necessary arrangement of his temporal affairs. He then adverted to his spiritual concerns, impressed evidently by a sense of their importance. It is not possible to express my feelings on that interesting occasion. I prayed to God and he enabled me to speak freely all I desired. My father's objections to the view I gave him of faith in Christ as the only way of salvation, were very few, and his heart appeared greatly softened. I retired from him, ready to say with the church, "Lo this is our God, we have waited for Him; He will come and save us." I saw the hand of the Lord, and was persuaded the issue would be favourable; pious books were recommended to him. These works he would formerly have refused to read, but they were received, and the divine blessing attended their perusal; for, from that period not a word escaped him that discovered any dependence for future happiness except on the Saviour sinners. His judgment was on the side of truth, and his continued plea was for mercy.

As our father's disease advanced God was pleased to shew us more fully that he had heard our prayers, and had seen our tears. Our aged parent now confined to his room requested us to pray with him, which we continued to do as long as he remained with us, accompanying our prayers by the reading of the scriptures with occasional remarks, and religious conversation. At these seasons he was generally much af-



fect, and would say, while affectionately pressing the hand of him who engaged in the devotional exercise—"Thank you, my dear son! God bless you!" What an interesting spectacle must it have been to those ministering spirits who rejoice in the conversion of a sinner, to see an enemy reconciled—one so long rebellious against the Redeemer, in his seventieth year, receiving the kingdom of God as a little child!

It was evident his prayers now proceeded from a mind deeply impressed by a view of the evil of sin. He would sometimes, in the language of our excellent liturgy, pour out the feelings of his heart in a way that surprised us, both as it respected the appropriate choice of expressions and the energy of his manner. And here it may not be improper to remark, (what, perhaps, is not sufficiently considered,) that this is one of the many practical advantages of our liturgy, that portions of scripture and forms of expression in prayer are impressed on the memory, which in a season of sickness enable the soul to express its wants to the Lord, and to call to mind his great and precious promises.

His mind was now much grieved on account of his having neglected to train up his children in the way of the Lord. What a miserable wretch, he exclaimed, should I be, had you been negligent of religion! His love to us was greatly increased as the disciples of Jesus; and while he spoke of the happiness he had lost by remaining so long in ignorance, he anticipated with delight the prospect of glory, and the hope of meeting us there to be separated no more for ever. Solicitude for that part of his family, which continued irreligious, was now visible in him. A few days before his de-

parture he remarked, "I am a poor miserable sinner;" and on its being observed to him, "But, Sir, you know there is a remedy for poor miserable sinners;" he replied with earnestness, "Yes, thank God, there is!" He now spoke with calmness of his approaching removal, and sent for his children that he might give them his parting blessing.

On the morning of his decease we gave thanks to God for his goodness, in affording us many solid proofs of our parent's conversion; and prayed, if it were his will, for yet clearer assurances of his safety. By what followed, God seemed to answer our prayers; for on asking him if he was happy, he replied, with all the energy he could, laying his hand on his breast, "O yes, I am happy! I am happy!" Shortly after this his spirit left its clay without a struggle or a groan.

I cannot close this account without adding an observation or two, which forcibly present themselves to my mind. The mercy of God was wonderfully displayed in the case of my dear father! How seldom are gray hairs converted to God! may this awful consideration have its proper effect on the aged sinner, and while he trembles in the prospect of approaching judgment, let him trace, in this narrative, the unsearchable riches of Christ, and be encouraged by it to look to that Saviour who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

What encouragement to prayer does this relation afford! For many years we prayed for our father; and once every week we were particularly engaged in interceding for him. We fainted not, and in due season we reaped. O! may this consideration strengthen those hands that begin to fall down, and stimulate to the unceasing exercise of this duty,

our main conformity to this Divine law; that we may receive the great Redeemer, as our prophet and our King, as well as our High Priest; and join with the pious Monarch of Israel, "Do not I love thy commandments above gold, and precious stones? Therefore hold I fast all the commandments, and all false ways I utterly abhor."

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To the Editor of the Christian Observer.

The following account was drawn up at my request by the eldest son of the gentleman to whom it relates, and as its tendency appeared to me important, I have presumed to request a place for it in your valuable miscellany. B.

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My father in the education of his children manifested the same indifference to our eternal welfare, which is observable in the generality of worldly people; but it pleased God, notwithstanding this disadvantage, to convince several of us of the infinite importance of religion, and the necessity of making it our first concern. In proportion as this conviction increased, were we grieved to think that our parent should still remain heedless of the things belonging to his peace. His strong prejudices forbade all religious conversation. We therefore confined our endeavours chiefly to frequent and earnest prayer in his behalf. Occasionally, indeed, when absent from home, we wrote letters of faithful admonition, tempered by filial affection and reverence, in which we earnestly exhorted him to turn to God. He discovered, however, a manifest aversion to the subject, and in some instances, treated it with contempt, although there is little doubt that impressions favourable to religion were, by these means, produced in his mind.

He was at length afflicted by a disease which gradually impaired his health, and in the end occasioned his death. He now became thoughtful, sought retirement, read his Bible and was regular in his devotional exercises. Being alone with him about this time, he opened his mind freely to me concerning his declining health, and the necessary arrangement of his temporal affairs. He then adverted to his spiritual concerns, impressed evidently by a sense of their importance. It is not possible to express my feelings on that interesting occasion. I prayed to God and he enabled me to speak freely all I desired. My father's objections to the view I gave him of faith in Christ as the only way of salvation, were very few, and his heart appeared greatly softened. I retired from him, ready to say with the church, "Lo this is our God, we have waited for Him; He will come and save us." I saw the hand of the Lord, and was persuaded the issue would be favourable; pious books were recommended to him. These works he would formerly have refused to read; but they were received, and the divine blessing attended their perusal; for, from that period not a word escaped him that discovered any dependence for future happiness except on the Saviour sinners. His judgment was on the side of truth, and his continued plea was for mercy.

As our father's disease advanced God was pleased to shew us more fully that he had heard our prayers, and had seen our tears. Our aged parent now confined to his room requested us to pray with him, which we continued to do as long as he remained with us, accompanying our prayers by the reading of the scriptures with occasional remarks, and religious conversation. At these seasons he was generally much af-



fectured, and would say, while affectionately pressing the hand of him who engaged in the devotional exercise—"Thank you, my dear son! God bless you!" What an interesting spectacle must it have been to those ministering spirits who rejoice in the conversion of a sinner, to see an enemy reconciled—one so long rebellious against the Redeemer, in his seventieth year, receiving the kingdom of God as a little child!

It was evident his prayers now proceeded from a mind deeply impressed by a view of the evil of sin. He would sometimes, in the language of our excellent liturgy, pour out the feelings of his heart in a way that surprised us, both as it respected the appropriate choice of expressions and the energy of his manner. And here it may not be improper to remark, (what, perhaps, is not sufficiently considered,) that this is one of the many practical advantages of our liturgy, that portions of scripture and forms of expression in prayer are impressed on the memory, which in a season of sickness enable the soul to express its wants to the Lord, and to call to mind his great and precious promises.

His mind was now much grieved on account of his having neglected to train up his children in the way of the Lord. What a miserable wretch, he exclaimed, should I be, had you been negligent of religion! His love to us was greatly increased as the disciples of Jesus; and while he spoke of the happiness he had lost by remaining so long in ignorance, he anticipated with delight the prospect of glory, and the hope of meeting us there to be separated no more for ever. Solicitude for that part of his family, which continued irreligious, was now visible in him. A few days before his de-

parture he remarked, "I am a poor miserable sinner;" and on its being observed to him, "But, Sir, you know there is a remedy for poor miserable sinners;" he replied with earnestness, "Yes, thank God, there is!" He now spoke with calmness of his approaching removal, and sent for his children that he might give them his parting blessing.

On the morning of his decease we gave thanks to God for his goodness, in affording us many solid proofs of our parent's conversion; and prayed, if it were his will, for yet clearer assurances of his safety. By what followed, God seemed to answer our prayers; for on asking him if he was happy, he replied, with all the energy he could, laying his hand on his breast, "O yes, I am happy! I am happy!" Shortly after this his spirit left its clay without a struggle or a groan.

I cannot close this account without adding an observation or two, which forcibly present themselves to my mind. The mercy of God was wonderfully displayed in the case of my dear father! How seldom are gray hairs converted to God! may this awful consideration have its proper effect on the aged sinner, and while he trembles in the prospect of approaching judgment, let him trace, in this narrative, the unsearchable riches of Christ, and be encouraged by it to look to that Saviour who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

What encouragement to prayer does this relation afford! For many years we prayed for our father; and once every week we were particularly engaged in interceding for him. We fainted not, and in due season we reaped. O! may this consideration strengthen those hands that begin to fall down, and stimulate to the unceasing exercise of this duty,

which when no other means, as is often the case, can be employed, may always be resorted to.

*From Rd. Hooker on Confirmation.*

The ancient custom of the church was, after they had baptized, to add thereunto imposition of hands, with effectual prayer, for the illumination of God's most Holy Spirit, to confirm and perfect that which the grace of the same spirit had already begun in baptism. Our prayers to that intent are available as well for others as for ourselves. Prayer procureth the blessing of God upon them, especially the prayer of such as God, either most respecteth for their piety and zeal that way, or else regardeth for that their place and calling bindeth them above others unto this duty as it doth both by natural and spiritual fathers. With prayers of spiritual and personal benediction, the manner hath been in all ages to use imposition of hands, as a ceremony betokening our restrained desires to the party whom we present unto God by prayer. In consecrations and ordinations of men unto rooms of divine calling, the like was usually done from the time of Moses, to Christ. Their suits, who came unto Christ for help, were also tendered oftentimes, and are expressed in such forms, or phrases of speech, as show that he was himself an observer of the same custom. *They brought him young children, to put his hands upon them and pray.* After the ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that which he had begun continued in the daily practice of his Apostles, whose prayer and imposition of hands were a mean, whereby thousands became partakers of the wonderful gifts of God. It no where appeareth that ever any did by prayer and imposition of hands, since the Apostles

time, make others partakers of the miraculous gifts and graces, as long as it pleased God to continue the same in his church, but only Bishops, the Apostles successors.

The reason wherefore confirmation by prayer and laying on of hands hath always continued, is for very special benefits which the church thereby enjoyeth. The fathers every where impute unto it, that gift and grace, not which maketh us first christian men, but when we are made such, assisteth us in all virtue, armeth us against temptation and sin. —For after baptism administered “there followeth, (saith Tertullian,) imposition of hands, with invocation and invitation of the Holy Ghost —which will come down from the father to rest upon the purified and blessed bodies, as it were acknowledging the waters of baptism a fit seat.”

As much is signified by Eusebius Emisenus saying, ‘The Holy Ghost which descendeth with saving influence upon the waters of baptism, doth there give that fulness which sufficeth for innocency, and afterwards exhibiteth in confirmation an augmentation of further grace.’ —The fathers therefore being thus persuaded, held confirmation as an ordinance apostolic, always profitable in God's church.

The cause of severing confirmation from baptism was sometimes in the minister, who being of inferior degree, must baptize, but not confirm; as in the instance recorded, 8 Act. 12, 17, and in their case of whom St. Jerom hath said, “I deny not but the custom of the church is, that the bishop should go abroad, and imposing his hands, pray for the gift of the Holy Ghost on them whom presbyters, and deacons far off, in lesser cities, have already baptized.” By this it appeareth,



that when the ministers of baptism were persons of inferior degree, the bishops did afterwards confirm whom such had before baptized.

Sometimes the cause of severing confirmation from baptism, was in the parties who received baptism being infants, at which age they might very well be admitted to live in the family; but because to fight in the army of God, to discharge the duties of a christian man, to bring forth the fruits, and do the works of the Holy Ghost, their time of ability was not yet come, (so that baptism were not deferred,) there could, *by stay of their confirmation*, no harm ensue, but rather good. For by this means it came to pass, that children, in expectation thereof, were seasoned with the principles of true religion, before malice and corrupt examples depraved their minds; a good foundation was laid betimes for direction of the whole course of their lives, the seed of the church of God was preserved, sincere and sound; the prelates and fathers of God's family, to whom the cure of their souls belongeth, saw by trial and examination of them, a part of their own heavy burthen discharged; reaped comfort by beholding the first beginnings of true godliness in tender years; glorified him whose praise they found in the mouths of infants, and neglected not so fit opportunity of giving every one fatherly encouragement and exhortation. Whereunto imposition of hands and prayer being added, our warrant for the good effect thereof is the same which patriarchs, prophets, priests, apostles, fathers, and men of God, have had for such their particular invocations and benedictions, as no man I suppose professing truth of religion, will easily think to have been without fruit. There is no cause

we should doubt of the benefit, but surely great cause to make complaint of the deep neglect of this christian duty almost with all them, to whom, by right of their place and calling, the same belongeth. Let them not take it in evil part, the thing is true; their small regard hereunto hath done harm in the church of God. —Thus much therefore, generally spoken, may serve for answer unto their demands, that require us to tell them—*Why there should be Confirmation in the Church?*

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*Bishop Horne on the Fall.*

Vast as the damage was, which our nature sustained at the fall, (and no man who looks into himself, or into the world around him, can doubt the extent of the evil,) it did not yet amount to an absolute *insolvency*. The *image of God*, deeply impressed upon man, at his creation, by infinite wisdom and goodness, can never be entirely obliterated, even by the associated powers of sin, and death, and hell. Some traces must and actually do appear of his celestial origin; something to indicate that the finger of God is in the work. The natural emotions of the soul, (independently of any considerations of *duty*,) manifest the latent spark of the divinity within us, the tear that falls from our eye, at the sight of pain and misery, the glow that flushes our cheeks at the recital of noble deeds and worthy actions, the instant indignation kindled in our souls by witnessing "the oppressors wrong," the intense throbbings of conjugal, filial, and parental love, the milder emanations of friendly affection, and the involuntary sacrifice of esteem and respect, which even vice and profligacy offer up at the shrine of holiness and virtue; all combine to evince,

which she was building. Jesus Christ, and salvation from first to last through him, were the constant topics of our conversation, and the repeated subjects of our prayers.

And here, let me not forget to mention, that the Liturgy and services of our venerable church were the delight of this aged person. "Oh, Sir," she would say to me, "How I love those church prayers! Surely there are no prayers like them; the language is so different from other prayers. In them, I seem to pray with the spirit and with the understanding also. I love that short petition: 'In the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, good Lord deliver us.' That prayer was, I believe, heard; for when I mentioned the humble confidence which St. Paul expressed in those memorable words, 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me in that day,' she anticipated me in the remainder of the verse, exclaiming, 'and not for me only, but for all them that love his appearing.'—When I left this instructive scene, taking, as I conceived, a last farewell, she said, 'I hope before to-morrow morning, I shall be in the mansions of the blessed.' Before my next visit, her spirit had returned unto God who gave it. Let the reader make his own observations upon this simple statement.

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*Extracts.*

Who can relish the feeble pleasures, which temporal things are capable of communicating, with this thought corroding his or her heart. "I may die this night, this hour; I am totally unprepared; 'tis therefore

possible, that before another hour, I may lift up mine eyes in hell?" And though more welcome thoughts commonly thrust out this *salutary* reflection; yet it will sometimes intrude even in the vigour of health, in the midst of company, and in scenes of mirth and dissipation; like some dire spectre however, it will be sure to haunt the hour of distress, and the bed of sickness, or to mingle with whatever reminds us of death and judgment. But how must it enhance our comforts, and mitigate our sorrows, and deliver us from the fear of death, to know that when this earthly house of our tabernacle shall be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens!"

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"Her parental fondness overlooked in her darling the growth of that pernicious weed, whose shade is deadly to every plant of celestial origin. She continued unconsciously to foster in me, that spirit of pride, which may indeed admit the admiration of excellence, or even the passing fervours of gratitude, but which is manifestly opposite to piety, that piety which consists in a surrender of self-will, of self-righteousness, of self in every form, to the divine justice, holiness and sovereignty. It was perhaps for training us to this temper of such difficult, such indispensable attainment, that the discipline of parental authority was intended."

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Books may secure our rational assent to the truth, but they can do no more. But mere rational assent falls far short of that faith, to which such mighty effects are ascribed. The direct means of obtaining a gift is to ask it, and faith is a gift.